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Effects of Statins on the Immunoglobulin G Glycome

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ABSTRACT

Background: Statins are among the most widely prescribed medications worldwide and usually many individuals involved in clinical and population studies are on statin therapy. Immunoglobulin G (IgG) glycosylation has been associated with numerous cardiometabolic risk factors.

Methods: The aim of this study was to investigate the possible association of statin use with N-glycosylation of IgG. The association was analyzed in two large population cohorts (TwinsUK and KORA) using hydrophilic interaction liquid chromatography (HILIC-UPLC) in the TwinsUK cohort and reverse phase liquid chromatography coupled with electrospray mass spectrometry (LC-ESI-MS) in the KORA cohort. Afterwards we investigated the same association for only one statin (rosuvastatin) in a subset of individuals from the randomized double-blind placebo-controlled JUPITER study using LC-ESI-MS for IgG glycome and HILIC-UPLC for total plasma N-glycome.

Results: In the TwinsUK population, the use of statins was associated with higher levels of core-fucosylated biantennary glycan structure with bisecting N-acetylglucosamine (FA2B) and lower levels of core-fucosylated biantennary digalactosylated monosialylated glycan structure (FA2G2S1). The association between statin use and FA2B was replicated in the KORA cohort. In the JUPITER trial we found no statistically significant differences between the randomly allocated placebo and rosuvastatin groups.

Conclusions: In the TwinsUK and KORA cohorts, statin use was associated with a small increase of pro-inflammatory IgG glycan, although this finding was not confirmed in a subset of participants from the JUPITER trial.

General Significance: Even if the association between IgG N-glycome and statins exists, it is not large enough to pose a problem for glycomic studies.

Key words: N-glycosylation, immunoglobulin G, total plasma N-glycome, statin, rosuvastatin

Introduction

Glycosylation is a complex, highly specific and regulated co- and post-translational process that covalently links glycans (complex oligosaccharides) to proteins and lipids [1,2]. Structural variations in the attached glycans strongly affect structure and function of proteins. Nearly all human plasma proteins, with exception of albumin, are modified by glycans [3,4]. Structural differences in terminal glycan antennae is common and recent studies demonstrated significant variation in glycome composition both within and between individuals [5–7]. Glycosylation is not only age- and gender-specific but is also affected by many environmental factors such as smoking, diet and medication [6,8–10]. Furthermore, glycosylation patterns have been characterized in relation to cardiovascular disease risk [11,12]. In particular decrease in immunoglobulin G (IgG) galactosylation has been associated with adverse cardiometabolic risk factors, including: cholesterol, triglycerides, C-reactive protein (CRP), HbA1c, insulin, glucose, body mass index (BMI) and kidney disease [13–15].

Statins, also known as HMG-CoA (3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl coenzyme A) reductase inhibitors, are among the most widely prescribed medications in the world. They are first-line drugs in the treatment of hypercholesterolemia and for cardiovascular prevention due to their efficacy in lowering LDL-cholesterol and

reducing cardiovascular morbidity and mortality [16,17]. However, more recent experimental and clinical investigations have revealed that statins are also potent anti-inflammatory agents that exert beneficial effects beyond LDL-cholesterol reduction [18,19].

Both glycans and statins are connected with inflammation processes. Glycosylation is changing in many inflammatory diseases [20] and minor changes in glycan composition can have a profound influence on IgG effector functions by modulating binding to Fc receptors, and can convert IgG from a pro-inflammatory into an anti-inflammatory agent [21–23]. Moreover, it has been shown that use of statins is associated with expression of some glycosyltransferases in leukocytes and the expression of those glycosyltransferases was also changed in coronary syndrome patients [12]. Furthermore, many individuals involved in clinical and population studies are on statin therapy. If use of statins influences glycome composition, it could bias the results of glycomic studies. Therefore, it would be biologically and clinically relevant to know how statins relate to IgG glycomes. In this study we analyzed the association of statins with N-glycosylation of IgG in two large population cohorts (TwinsUK and KORA). Afterwards we investigated the same association for only one statin (rosuvastatin) in a subset of samples from the randomized double-blind placebo-controlled JUPITER study.

Material and methods

Study Subjects

This study was based on plasma samples obtained from three cohorts - the TwinsUK, the KORA and the JUPITER study. The demographic characteristics of the study populations are presented in Table 1. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

TwinsUK registry is a national register of adult twins. Twins were recruited as volunteers by successive media campaigns without selecting for particular diseases or traits [24]. Statin drug status was gathered for 2247 individuals (328 cases and 1919 controls) with glycan data available. Statins included atorvastatin, simvastatin, fluvastatin, pravastatin and rosuvastatin.

German population study KORA F4 [25] (“Kooperative Gesundheitsforschung in der Region Augsburg”), included 1665 samples with statin drug status (257 cases and 1408 controls) and available glycan data. Statins included atorvastatin, simvastatin, fluvastatin, pravastatin and lovastatin.

Justification for the Use of Statins in Primary Prevention: An Intervention Trial Evaluating Rosuvastatin trial (JUPITER; www.ClinicalTrials.gov; NCT00239681) [19] was a double-blind, placebo-controlled trial that evaluated rosuvastatin 20 mg daily versus placebo in the primary prevention of first major CVD events in healthy men ≥ 50 years and women ≥ 60 years with low-density lipoprotein cholesterol < 130 mg/dL, but who were at increased risk of cardiovascular events on the basis of elevated high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (≥ 2 mg/L).

IgG isolation

Immunoglobulin G was isolated from plasma by affinity chromatography using 96-well protein G monolithic plates (BIA Separations, Ljubljana, Slovenia) as described previously [7]. Briefly, 100 μ L of plasma was diluted 10 \times with PBS, filtered through 0.45 μ m GHP filter plate (Pall Corporation, Ann Arbor, MI, USA), and then applied to the protein G plate and instantly washed. IgGs were eluted with 1 mL of 0.1 M formic acid (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany) and immediately neutralized with 1 M ammonium bicarbonate (Acros Organics, NJ, USA).

IgG N-glycans release and labeling

Isolated IgG samples were dried in a vacuum centrifuge. After drying, proteins were denatured with addition of 30 μ L 1.33% SDS (w/v) (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) and by incubation at 60 °C for 10 min. Subsequently, 10 μ L of 4 % Igepal-CA630 (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) and 1.25 mU PNGase F (ProZyme, Hayward, CA, USA) in 10 μ L 5 \times PBS were added. The samples were incubated overnight at 37 °C for N-glycan release. The released N-glycans were labeled with 2-aminobenzamide (2-AB). The labeling mixture was freshly prepared by dissolving 2-AB (19.2 mg/mL, Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) and 2-picoline borane (44.8 mg/mL, Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) in DMSO (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) and glacial acetic acid (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany) mixture (70:30, v/v). 25 μ L of labeling mixture was added to each N-glycan sample in the 96-well plate and the plate was sealed using adhesive seal. Mixing was achieved by shaking for 10 min, followed by two hour incubation at 65 °C. Samples (in a volume of 75 μ L) were brought to 80% ACN (v/v) by adding 300 μ L of ACN (J.T. Baker, Phillipsburg, NJ, USA). Free label and reducing agent were removed from the samples using HILIC-SPE. 200 μ L of 0.1 g/mL suspension of microcrystalline cellulose (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany) in water was applied to each well of a 0.45 μ m GHP filter plate (Pall Corporation, Ann Arbor, MI, USA). Solvent was removed by application of vacuum using a vacuum manifold (Millipore Corporation, Billerica, MA, USA). All wells were prewashed using

5× 200 µL water, followed by equilibration using 3× 200 µL acetonitrile/water (80:20, v/v). The samples were loaded to the wells. The wells were subsequently washed 7× using 200 µL acetonitrile/water (80:20, v/v). Glycans were eluted 2× with 100 µL of water and combined eluates were stored at –20 °C until usage.

Total plasma proteins N-glycans release and labeling

Total plasma proteins glycans were prepared in the same way as the IgG glycans. The only difference is that, instead with dried IgG eluate, the preparation begun with 10 µl of blood plasma and with addition of 20 µL 2 % SDS (w/v) (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) to each sample before the incubation at 65 °C for 10 min.

Hydrophilic Interaction Chromatography (HILIC)-UPLC

Fluorescently labeled N-glycans were separated by hydrophilic interaction chromatography on Waters Acquity ultra-performance liquid chromatography (UPLC) instrument (Milford, MA, USA) consisting of a quaternary solvent manager, sample manager and a FLR fluorescence detector set with excitation and emission

wavelengths of 250 and 428 nm, respectively. The instrument was under the control of Empower 2 software, build 2145 (Waters, Milford, MA, USA). Labeled N-glycans were separated on a Waters bridged ethylene hybrid (BEH) Glycan chromatography column, 100 × 2.1 mm i.d. for IgG glycans and 150 × 2.1 mm i.d. for total plasma proteins glycans, 1.7 µm BEH particles, with 100 mM ammonium formate, pH 4.4, as solvent A and acetonitrile as solvent B. The separation method used a linear gradient of 75-62% acetonitrile (v/v) at flow rate of 0.4 ml/min in a 25 min analytical run for IgG glycans and linear gradient of 70-53 % acetonitrile (v/v) at flow rate of 0.561 ml/min in a 24.81 min analytical run for total plasma proteins glycans. The separation temperature was 60°C for IgG glycans and 25°C for total plasma proteins glycans. Samples were maintained at 10 °C before injection. Data processing was performed using an automatic processing method with a traditional integration algorithm after which each chromatogram was manually corrected to maintain the same intervals of integration for all the samples. The chromatograms were all separated in the same manner into 24 peaks (GP1-24) for IgG glycans and 46 peaks (GP1-46) for total plasma proteins glycans and the amount of glycans in each peak was expressed as % of total integrated area. The system was calibrated using an external standard of hydrolyzed and 2-AB labeled glucose oligomers from which the retention times for the individual glycans were converted to glucose units [26]. Glycans were analyzed on the basis of their elution positions and measured in glucose units then compared to reference values in the “Glyco-Base” database (available at: <http://glycobase.nibrt.ie>) for structure assignment [27]. For IgG

glycans, in addition to 24 directly measured glycan traits, 52 derived traits were calculated. These derived traits average particular glycosylation features (galactosylation, fucosylation, bisecting GlcNAc, and sialylation) (Supplementary Table 1).

IgG tryptic digestion and purification

25 µg IgG was digested with 200 ng of trypsin at 37°C (Worthington, USA) overnight. Resulting tryptic glycopeptides were purified by reverse phase solid phase extraction using Chromabond C18ec beads (Marcherey-Nagel, Germany). C18 beads were activated with 80% ACN containing 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) (Sigma-Aldrich, USA) and conditioned with 0.1% TFA. Tryptic digests were diluted 10X with 0.1% TFA, loaded onto C18 beads, washed with 0.1% TFA and finally eluted with 20% ACN containing 0.1% TFA. Eluates containing tryptic glycopeptides were dried by vacuum centrifugation and dissolved with 20 µL of ultrapure water.

LC-ESI-MS/MS analysis of IgG tryptic glycopeptides

Tryptic digests were analyzed on nanoACUITY UPLC system (Waters, USA) coupled to micrOTOF-Q mass spectrometer (BrukerDaltonics, Bremen, Germany). 9 μ L of eluates containing IgG tryptic glycopeptides was loaded into Acclaim PepMap100 C8 (5mm \times 300 μ m i.d.) trap column and washed 1 min with 0.1% TFA (solvent A) at a flow rate of 40 μ L/min. Separation was achieved on a Halo C18 nano-LC column (150mm \times 75 μ m i.d., 2.7 μ m HALO fused core particles) (Advanced Materials technology, USA) using a 3.5 min gradient at a flow rate of 1 μ L/min from 18% to 25% solvent B (80% ACN). Column temperature was 30°C. Mass spectra were recorded from m/z 200 to 1900 with 2 averages at a frequency of 0,5 Hz. Quadrupole ion energy and collision energy of the MS were set at 4 eV. NanoACUITY UPLC system and the Bruker micrOTOF-Q were operated under HyStar software, version 3.2. In Caucasian populations, IgG2 and IgG3 tryptic Fc glycopeptides have identical peptide moieties and are therefore not distinguishable by this profiling method [28]. Data were extracted using an in-house Python script. Briefly, data were m/z recalibrated using a subset of hand-picked analytes having a high signal-to-noise ratio and the expected isotopic distribution. After recalibration, intensities for top four isotopologes were extracted using 10 ppm m/z window. Based on top signals, retention times were aligned towards the cohort median. After defining retention time bins for analytes of interest, all of the signals belonging to a single analyte for

every sample were summed up. In Caucasian populations, IgG2 and IgG3 have identical peptide moieties (E293EQFNSTFR301) of their tryptic Fc glycopeptides and were, therefore, not distinguished by the profiling method [23]. For statistical analysis we used the most prominent 20 glycopeptides that were present in subclasses IgG1 and IgG2/3 and the most prominent 10 glycopeptides that were present in IgG4. Derived traits that represent common biologically meaningful features (fucosylation, bisection, agalactosylation, monogalactosylation, digalactosylation and sialylation) shared among several measured glycans were calculated for each subclass group as described previously [29] (Supplementary Table 1).

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out using Stata version 12 and R (version 3.1.2) and visualized using the ggplot2 package.

Glycans were globally normalized and log transformed to account for the right-skewness of their distributions. To remove experimental biases, all measurements were adjusted for batch and run-day effects using ComBat (R-package sva). Derived glycan traits were calculated using normalized and batch-

corrected glycan measurements (exponential of batch corrected measurements). All variables were centered and scaled to have mean 0 and standard deviation 1. Outliers (more than 6SD from the mean) were excluded from the analysis.

Association analyses between statin use and glycan traits were performed using linear mixed regressions adjusting for age, sex, BMI in KORA cohort, and in the TwinsUK cohort, with additional adjustment for family relatedness as random effect. We used Bonferroni correction to account for multiple testing in the TwinsUK cohort ($P=0.05/77\approx 6\times 10^{-4}$).

For the TwinsUK cohort, the Bonferroni-significant associations between statins and glycans were replicated in the previously excluded group of MZ discordant twins using the same model. If the regression coefficients were the same direction in both analyses, the results were combined using inverse-variance fixed effect meta-analysis.

For the JUPITER study the differences were calculated between glycan values after and before the randomized allocation of placebo or rosuvastatin. Differences between the placebo and rosuvastatin groups were tested using the Mann Whitney U test.

Results

Association of statins with IgG glycome in the TwinsUK cohort

IgG glycome composition and information about the use of statins was available for 2247 individuals from the TwinsUK cohort. The demographic characteristics of the study population are summarized in Table 1. Released and 2-AB labeled IgG glycans were analyzed by HILIC-UPLC. Chromatograms obtained for IgG glycans were separated in 24 glycan peaks, which correspond to different glycan structures (GP1-24, Figure 1). In addition to 24 directly measured glycan traits, 53 derived traits were calculated as described previously [7] (Supplementary Table 1). These derived traits represent common biologically meaningful features (fucosylation, bisection, agalactosylation, monogalactosylation, digalactosylation, sialylation, etc.) shared among several measured glycans.

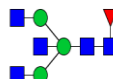
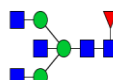
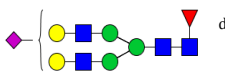
Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the study populations

	TwinsUK				KORA		JUPITER	
	No Discordant Twins (n=2181)	MZ Discordant Twins (n=66)						
	No statins	Statins	No statins	Statins	No Statins	Statins	Placebo	Rosuvastatin
N	1886	295	33	33	1408	257	47	50
Age (years) ^a	55 (±12)	63 (±8)	62 (±10)	62 (±10)	60 (± 9)	65 (±7)	67 (±5)	68 (±9)
Sex (% Female)	93%	90%	94%	94%	54%	43%	51%	50%
BMI (Kg/m2) ^a	26.5 (±4.8)	28.0 (±5.8)	27.6 (±5.4)	27.3 (±5.0)	28.0 (±4.8)	29.3 (±4.9)	27.8 (±4.6)	29.9 (±5.6)
Type 2 DM, N	28	27	2	3	97	52	1	0

^a Values are expressed as mean and standard deviation (in brackets)

To find associations between statins use and IgG glycan traits, we performed linear regression analysis in the population excluding monozygotic (MZ) discordant twins. We then validated Bonferroni significant glycans in MZ twin pairs discordant for statins use. If the regression coefficients were in the same direction in both analyses, we combined the results using inverse-variance fixed effect meta-analysis. Table 2 presents the list of glycans significantly associated with statins use in the discovery cohort, the validation results in the MZ discordant cohort and the meta-analysis results. The use of statins was associated with a small increase in GP6 and GP6ⁿ, which contain core-fucosylated biantennary glycan structure with bisecting N-acetylglucosamine (FA2B), together with biantennary monogalactosylated glycan structure (A2G1) in a much smaller amount, and a small decrease in GP18, which contains core-fucosylated biantennary digalactosylated monosialylated glycan structure (FA2G2S1), together with biantennary digalactosylated monosialylated glycan structure with bisecting N-acetylglucosamine (A2BG2S1) in a much smaller amount [7].

Table 2. IgG glycan traits significantly associated with statin use in the TwinsUK cohort ($P < 6 \times 10^{-4}$) and replicated in the KORA cohort ($P < 0.05$)

Glycan trait	TwinsUK								KORA								
	Discovery			MZ discordant			Fixed effect meta-analysis		IgG1			IgG2/3			IgG4		
	Beta ^e	SE ^f	P value	Beta ^e	SE ^f	P value	Beta ^e [95%CI ^g]	P value	Beta ^e	SE ^f	P value	Beta ^e	SE ^f	P value	Beta ^e	SE ^f	P value
% of FA2B^d glycan in total IgG glycans ^a 	0.036	0.009	4.26E-05	0.013	0.02	0.509	0.032 [0.02, 0.05]	5.50E-05	0.039	0.014	7.23E-03	0.039	0.014	6.55E-03	0.041	0.014	4.93E-03
% of FA2B^d glycan in neutral IgG glycans ^b 	0.029	0.007	1.06E-04	0.013	0.017	0.438	0.026 [0.013, 0.04]	1.00E-04	0.031	0.015	3.60E-02	0.034	0.015	2.08E-02	0.038	0.015	9.19E-03
% of FA2G2S1^d glycan in total IgG glycans ^c 	-0.031	0.009	3.39E-04	-0.267	0.02	0.189	-0.07 [-0.08, -0.05]	5.30E-18	not significant			not significant			not significant		

^a Corresponds to the main structure in GP6 in HILIC-UPLC measurement

^b Corresponds to the main structure in GP6ⁿ in HILIC-UPLC measurement

^c Corresponds to the main structure in GP18 in HILIC-UPLC measurement

^d Structure abbreviations: all N-glycans have core sugar sequence consisting of two N-acetylglucosamines (GlcNAc) and three mannose residues; F indicates a core fucose α 1–6 linked to the inner GlcNAc; Ax, number of antenna (GlcNAc) on trimannosyl core; A2, biantennary glycan with both GlcNAcs as β 1–2 linked; B, bisecting GlcNAc linked β 1–4 to β 1–3 mannose; Gx, number of β 1–4 linked galactose (G) on antenna; Sx, number (x) of sialic acids linked to galactose. Structural schemes: blue square, N-acetylglucosamine; red triangle, fucose; green circle, mannose; yellow circle, galactose; purple diamond, N-acetylneuraminic acid

^e Regression Coefficient

^f Standard Error

^g Confidence Interval

We also explored the association between individual statin use and IgG glycan traits for simvastatin (111 cases vs. 1919 controls) and atorvastatin (93 cases vs. 1919 controls) in the TwinsUK cohort. Association analysis was performed using linear mixed regressions analysis adjusting for age, sex, BMI and family relatedness as random effect. Although 31 glycan traits were nominally significantly associated with simvastatin use (including GP6, GP6ⁿ and GP18 with regression coefficients in the same direction as found for all statins together), none of them remained significant after correction for multiple testing (Supplementary Table 2). For atorvastatin no associations were found (Supplementary Table 2).

Replication in the KORA cohort

We aimed to replicate the associations found in the TwinsUK population in 1665 individuals from KORA cohort (257 cases and 1408 controls, Table 1). IgG Fc tryptic N-glycopeptides were measured by LC-ESI-MS, which enables glycosylation measurement of IgG Fc region at subclass-specific level. Linear regressions were applied to study the previously found significant associations between the use of statins and the glycan traits. Nominally statistically significant associations have been confirmed for two of three glycan traits (confirmed for FA2B in total and neutral IgG glycans, not confirmed for FA2G2S1) for each IgG subclass (IgG1, IgG2/3, IgG4) (Table

2). The regression coefficients were in the same direction, and of similar magnitude as found in the TwinsUK population.

Association of rosuvastatin with IgG Fc N-glycopeptides and total plasma proteins N-glycome in the JUPITER study

JUPITER is a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled study investigating the use of rosuvastatin versus placebo in the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease [19]. In a subset of JUPITER, we examined the effect of one year of rosuvastatin 20mg/day on the glycosylation of IgG Fc region at subclass-specific level (analysis of IgG tryptic glycopeptides by LC-ESI-MS). The analysis was performed on 97 individuals - 47 on placebo and 50 on rosuvastatin (three individuals in the placebo group were excluded from the analysis because of low signal intensity) (Table 1). Derived traits that represent common biologically meaningful features (fucosylation, bisection, agalactosylation, monogalactosylation, digalactosylation and sialylation) shared among several measured glycans were calculated for each subclass group as described previously [29] (Supplementary Table 1).

We investigated the differences between the placebo and the rosuvastatin group (Supplementary Figure 1). For each derived trait of each IgG subclass (IgG1, IgG2/3, IgG4), differences were calculated between glycan values after and before the placebo/rosuvastatin treatment. We found no statistically significant differences between the two groups (Supplementary Table 3). We also tried to replicate the associations found in the TwinsUK population (for glycan traits corresponding to FA2B and FA2G2S1). However, treatment with rosuvastatin had no effect on these glycan traits in any of the IgG subclasses.

To determine whether rosuvastatin induces a more general change in glycosylation of multiple proteins, we searched for associations between N-glycome of total plasma proteins (46 glycan peaks of enzymatically released, 2-AB labeled N-glycans obtained by HILIC-UPLC, Supplementary Figure 2) and the use of rosuvastatin in the same individuals from the JUPITER study (Supplementary Figure 3). We found no significant difference in N-glycosylation of plasma proteins between the studied groups (Supplementary Table 4).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the possible association of statin use with N-glycosylation of IgG in the TwinsUK and KORA populations. Afterwards we investigated the same association for only one statin (rosuvastatin) in a subset of participants from the randomized double-blind placebo-controlled JUPITER study.

In the TwinsUK population, three glycan traits (GP6, GP6ⁿ and GP18) were found to be significantly associated with statin use in the discovery cohort, and they remained significant after the meta-analysis of the results from the discovery cohort and the validation results from the MZ discordant cohort. The use of statins was associated with higher levels of GP6 and GP6ⁿ (which mostly contain core-fucosylated biantennary glycan structure with bisecting N-acetylglucosamine - FA2B) and lower levels of GP18 (which mostly contains core-fucosylated biantennary digalactosylated monosialylated glycan structure - FA2G2S1). The association between statin use and FA2B was replicated in the KORA cohort. IgG Fc tryptic N-glycopeptides with FA2B glycan were significantly associated with statin use for all three IgG subclasses (IgG1, IgG2/3 and IgG4), in both total and neutral glycans. The regression coefficients were in the same direction, and of similar magnitude as found in the TwinsUK population. The association between statin use and FA2G2S1 glycopeptides did not reach statistical significance.

FA2B is one of the IgG's agalactosylated glycans. Glycans that lack terminal galactose activate complement and make IgG pro-inflammatory [30–32]. Also, FA2B is one of three glycans that change considerably with age (along with FA2G2 and FA2BG2) and the combination of these three glycans can explain up to 58% of variance in chronological age [33]. FA2B is increasing with age, and it is also increasing in many different pathological conditions (e.g. autoimmune diseases [34,35], kidney disease [14] and cancer [36]). In contrast, FA2G2S1, the major sialylated glycan in IgG glycome, is decreasing with age [33], and it was also reported to be decreased in patients with systemic lupus erythematosus [34] and kidney disease [14]. Terminal α 2,6-sialylation of IgG glycans decreases the ability of IgG to bind Fc γ receptors (Fc γ R_s), which increases expression of inhibitory Fc γ RIIB and is anti-inflammatory [21,37]. However, these findings have not been confirmed in all studies [22,38,39]. Taken together, these suggest that a pro-inflammatory pattern of IgG glycan was found in association with statins in both the TwinUK and KORA studies.

Glycosylation is known to be affected by factors such as: expression levels, localization and substrate affinities and specificities of the glyco-enzymes, as well as abundance and trafficking of glycoprotein substrates and activated sugar donors concentrations [40–43]. Therefore, the observed changes in N-glycan profiles may be

the result of slight alterations in the levels of glycosyltransferases and glycosidases, caused by statin use or some other underlying factor.

Patients who take statins usually have dyslipidemia and other CVD risk factors. Hence, there is a possibility that the associations that we found could be due to the connection between the IgG glycans and the lipid profile or other potential confounders, which was previously reported in some studies [33,44]. Therefore, to test whether the associations found between statin use and IgG glycosylation are the consequence of the direct influence of statin therapy, we investigated this association for randomly allocated rosuvastatin therapy versus placebo in the JUPITER trial. We found no statistically significant differences between the placebo and rosuvastatin groups after one year on study treatment. We also analyzed association between total plasma proteins N-glycome and rosuvastatin in the same individuals from the JUPITER study to determine whether rosuvastatin induces a more general change in glycosylation of multiple proteins. We found no difference in plasma glycosylation.

When we explored the association between individual statin use and IgG glycan traits in the TwinsUK cohort for simvastatin and atorvastatin, we found 31 nominally significantly associated glycan traits with simvastatin use and no glycan traits associated with atorvastatin use (Supplementary Table 2). Although none of

them remained significant after correction for multiple testing, the number of cases was too small (≈ 100) to detect a small effect size. Therefore, there is an indication that different statins may differently influence IgG N-glycome and that could be the reason we did not find any associations between rosuvastatin and IgG glycan traits. Another explanation might be that the association between statin use and IgG glycans we found in the TwinsUK and KORA cohorts was confounded by the lipid profile or other CVD risk factors, which drove the pro-inflammatory changes that we saw, and that those effects were eliminated in the randomized double-blind placebo-controlled JUPITER study.

Conclusion

In the TwinsUK and KORA cohorts, statin use was associated with a small increase of pro-inflammatory IgG glycan, although this finding was not confirmed in a subset of participants from the JUPITER trial. There are several possible explanations for this: (1) some statins, but not rosuvastatin, may influence the IgG glycome; (2) the association between statin use and IgG glycans may be confounded by the lipid profile or other indications for statin use (eg. CVD risk factors) which drove the pro-inflammatory changes that we saw in the TwinsUK and KORA cohorts but not in the randomized JUPITER study; (3) the number of individuals from the JUPITER that we included in the analysis was smaller than in other two cohorts (97

individuals from the JUPITER trial vs. 2247 individuals from the TwinsUK cohort and 1665 individuals from the KORA cohort), hence lack of association might also be due to power issues or due to lack of signal in the JUPITER trial, which enrolled individuals who had evidence of low-grade chronic inflammation. Although we cannot give a definite answer to the question whether statins have any influence on the composition of the IgG glycans, we can conclude that the magnitude of their effect on IgG N-glycome is too small to confound associations with N-glycome observed in clinical or epidemiological studies.

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Figure legends

Figure 1. Chromatogram of 2-AB labeled N-linked glycans released from IgG and separated by HILIC-UPLC. The integration areas, together with glycan structures present in each peak are given. Peaks are numbered from GP1-GP24.

Supplementary files

Supplementary Figure 1. The differences in derived IgG glycan traits (for each IgG subclass) between the placebo (red, 0) and the rosuvastatin (blue, 1) group. For each group there are two time points - before (left) and after (right) the placebo/rosuvastatin treatment.

Supplementary Figure 2. Chromatogram of 2-AB labeled N-linked glycans released from total plasma proteins and separated by HILIC-UPLC. The integration areas, together with glycan structures present in each peak are given. Peaks are numbered from PGP1-PGP46.

Supplementary Figure 3. . The differences in total plasma N-glycome (glycan peaks PGP1-46 obtained by HILIC-UPLC) between the placebo (red, 0) and the rosuvastatin (blue, 1) group. For each group there are two time points - before (left) and after (right) the placebo/rosuvastatin treatment.

Supplementary Table 1. Description of IgG glycan traits (directly measured and derived traits) measured by HILIC-UPLC and LC-ESI-MS (with mass list).

Supplementary Table 2. Association analysis between individual statin use (for simvastatin and atorvastatin) and IgG glycan traits in the TwinsUK cohort . P values and regression coefficients (beta) were obtained from linear mixed regressions analysis adjusting for age, sex, BMI and family relatedness as random effect.

Supplementary Table 3. P values for JUPITER study IgG glycans obtained from Mann Whitney U test. For each glycan trait for each IgG subclass (IgG1, IgG2/3, IgG4) differences were calculated between glycan values after and before the placebo/rosuvastatin treatment and then the placebo and the rosuvastatin groups were compared.

Supplementary Table 4. P values for JUPITER study total plasma N-glycans obtained from Mann Whitney U test. For each glycan trait differences were calculated between glycan values after and before the placebo/rosuvastatin treatment and then the placebo and the rosuvastatin groups were compared.

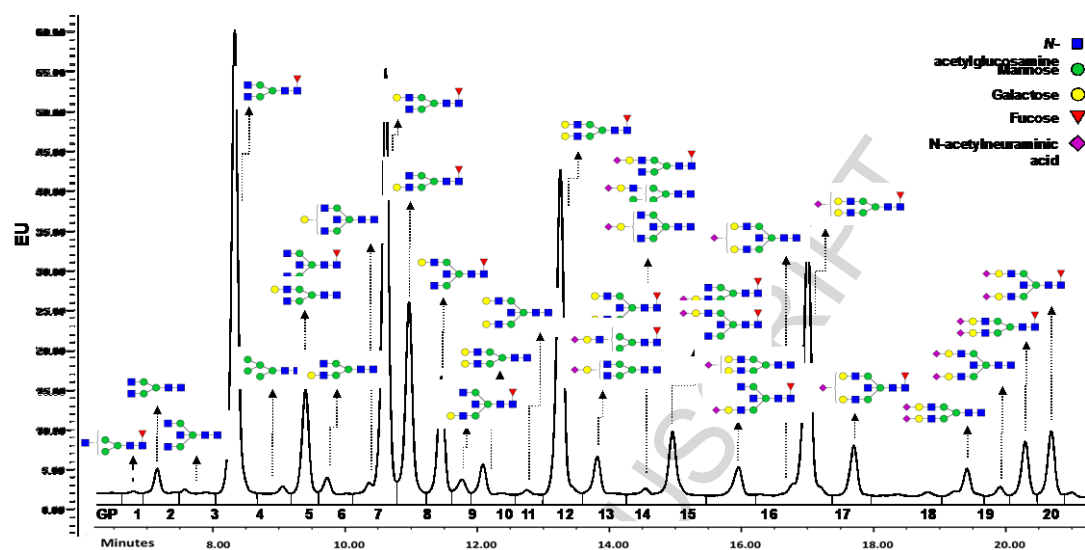


Figure 1

Highlights

- In the first cohort 3 glycan traits were significantly associated with statin use
- 2 of them were replicated in the second cohort
- In a rosuvastatin clinical trial no significant differences were found
- Statin use does not pose a problem for glycomic studies